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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ADDIS ABABA 004000

SIPDIS

AF FOR A/S FRAZER

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KPKO](#) [MARR](#) [ET](#) [ER](#) [EE BORDER](#)

SUBJECT: ETHIOPIA: MELES DISCUSSES BORDER ISSUE WITH DAS

YAMAMOTO

Classified By: CDA Vicki Huddleston for reason 1.4 (b,d)

¶11. (C) Summary: Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles told visiting DAS Don Yamamoto and Charge Huddleston November 29, that the time is not yet ripe to move forward on the boundary dispute with Eritrea. The Prime Minister said he would not send a team to attend a meeting called by the EEBC, but was not opposed to a future meeting. Meles maintained that resolution of the border issue was dependent on Eritrean President Isaias accepting a dialogue on normalizing relations. In reference to the recent UNSC resolution imposing possible sanctions should war resume, Meles assured the US delegation that Ethiopia would withdraw troops to as far as 140 km away from the border. End Summary.

Border Dispute Still on Hold

¶12. (C) Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles told visiting DAS Yamamoto and Charge Huddleston that the time was not yet appropriate for moving forward on resolving the border dispute. Meles insisted that Eritrean President Isaias must renounce war as a viable option for resolution of the seven-year old border dispute. Meles noted Ethiopia's commitment not to resort to war as a tool for resolving the border dispute. The international community should ignore Isaias' "temper tantrums". Isaias' ploy to stop UNMEE flights is another pressure point on the international community to resolve the border dispute.

¶13. (C) Referring to the recent UNSC resolution, DAS Yamamoto remarked on the requirement for Ethiopia to accept the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission decision, which Eritrea has accepted and Ethiopia has only accepted "in principal". Meles replied that demarcation of the border without addressing the fundamental causes for the conflict (i.e. taking steps to normalize relations) will not guarantee sustainable peace. As a way forward, the DAS asked if Meles would send a team to a meeting called by the EEBC, which Ethiopia has refused to attend thus far. Meles said no -- not until Isaias shows commitment to peacefully resolving the border dispute without the use of force and a dialogue to improve relations.

UNSC resolution - Acceptable

¶14. (C) Meles indicated that Ethiopia could live with the latest UNSC resolution calling for possible sanctions against Eritrea if it did not lift restrictions on UNMEE operations and if either Eritrea or Ethiopia returned to conflict. The resolution also demanded Ethiopia accept the EEBC decision, but did not threaten sanctions on this point. Meles said Ethiopia would not abide by any UN resolution if sanctions were tied to Ethiopia's full acceptance of the EEBC decision without clearly calling for a dialogue to normalize relations and address the root causes of the war. Meles added that the head of the EEBC, Sir Elihu Lauterpacht, exceeded his mandate in making the final adjudication of the border dispute.

¶15. (C) To meet the current UN resolution demands to ease border tensions, Meles said he ordered his commanders to withdraw Ethiopia's troops to the December 16, 2004 line. In a separate meeting with DAS Yamamoto, Ethiopian Chief of Staff General Samora confirmed receipt of this order and noted that it would mean withdrawing troops to as much as 140 km from the border in some areas. The withdrawal process would take a week. Meles said he doubted whether Isaias would reciprocate. General Samora demurred in criticizing the call, noting that Eritrea had been moving troops to the border area. UNMEE Deputy SRSG Azouz Ennifar told DAS and Charge separately that Ethiopia had been particularly helpful to UNMEE and that the UN was aware of where Ethiopia's troops were positioned. This was not the case with Eritrea. Ennifar noted that UNMEE was not able to verify Eritrea's troops and there was evidence that two divisions of Eritrean troops may have been re-deployed from the Sudan border to other areas.

Comment: There is Light, But in the Distance

16. (C) Meles' stated position remains unchanged. Progress on the border can proceed only if Meles is assured of a dialogue with Eritrea on normalizing relations and Isaias receives equal assurance of demarcation of the border. Potential elements for moving both parties proposed by the EEBC discussed are "open borders", allowing free movement of people without restrictions after demarcation; and giving full authority to the EEBC to demarcate the border, including areas where there are "anomalies and impracticalities." Ultimately, when both sides view the necessity for peaceful bilateral discussions, resolution of the border will become a greater priority.

HUDDLESTON